

Environmental Assessments and Modification Policy

Stakeholder Input Summary

Environmental Assessments and Environmental Modifications are two of the DDA-operated Waiver program support services. These services support participants to have their needs assessed and have changes made to their home, if needed. They are designed to support their efforts to be more independent or create a safer environment.

The Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) issued its proposed policy for Environmental Assessments and Modifications on January 30, 2023, requesting input from participants, families, Coordination of Community Service agencies, community providers, and advocacy organizations. The stakeholder input period ended on February 13, 2023. In total, eight (8) unduplicated stakeholders submitted input. Below is a summary of the stakeholder recommendations and the DDA's responses.

	Comment	DDA Response
1	Comment: The policy appears eminently reasonable and helpful. I especially appreciate the acknowledgement that modifications may be necessary for behavioral reasons, as well as the more traditional physical disability reasons.	The DDA appreciates all comments and feedback.
2	Comment: MDTAP is NOT a funding resource for Environmental Modifications. Please remove from reference in the Environmental Assessments and Environmental Modifications Policy as it relates to Eligibility Criteria.	<p>The DDA removed the requirement for MDTAP to be used as a funding source in this policy.</p> <p>Note: MDTAP is a resource for people to explore and experience what is available in Assistive Technology that will improve people's access to live on their own and their community. MDATP also partners with a non-profit organization to provide a loan product to assist with the costs of products for individuals and families who can demonstrate their ability to repay the loan.</p>

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3	<p>Comment: Please clarify whether individuals that are supported by Shared Living agencies can ask for Environmental Modifications to the home because it is not the participant’s home. If a stair glide is appropriate in a residential site and private homes why are they not appropriate in a shared living care provider’s home?</p>	<p>Environmental Modifications are available to participants receiving Shared Living services.</p> <p>The owner of the primary residence provides in writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Approval for the requested Environmental Modification; and ii. Agreement that the participant will be allowed to remain in the primary residence for at least one (1) year.
4	<p>Comment: All approvals and reviews by the DDA Regional Office, whether it be for document review, bids, or acceptance, should be done by a specific time (i.e. 30 days). A lot of these modifications are being done for the safety of the client. I think having a set date by the DDA Regional Office to complete their end of things would be the most efficient way.</p>	<p>The DDA Regional Offices are required to review PCPs within 20 days. At times, additional information is requested in order to make a determination.</p>
5	<p>Comment: Provide more resources for approved contractors within the state/county for making these modifications. There are not enough approved contractors. Let the client use their own contractors.</p>	<p>The DDA announced the launch of our new online provider directory which became live on December 16, 2022. The new directory makes it easier for people to find providers in their area based on county, waiver type, service and/or through a keyword search. The DDA is updating the directory to list Environmental Modification providers under the Environmental Modifications service category</p> <p>The directory can be found on the DDA website at: https://maryland.providersearch.com/</p>

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6	<p>Comment: Recommend a provision that allows for emergency requests that would not require going through the PCP process.</p>	<p>Participants can work with their teams to submit an Emergency Revised Plan to the regional office if there is a concern about health and safety.</p> <p>An Emergency Revised Plan is a PCP that is revised when a participant has an emergent request for additional services that need to be initiated within 48 hours.</p>
7	<p>Comment: The DDA should consider including additional items on the list related to behavioral health and safety needs such as padding of walls or floors or modifications of strength of drywall, or type of floor coverings (i.e. replacing carpeting with vinyl flooring for mobility or behavioral concerns.)</p>	<p>The list of Environmental Modifications in this policy is a non-exhaustive list and should be based on a participant's assessed need.</p> <p>If the request for Environmental Modifications involves a restraint or restriction of the participation's rights, it must be included and described in the participant's approved Behavior Support Plan.</p>
8	<p>Comment: Recommend adding banisters on indoor and outdoor stairs, to the list of eligible Environmental Modifications.</p>	<p>This modification is covered under this waiver program support service based on the identified assessed need within the participant's Person Centered Plan.</p> <p>This policy will be amended to include banisters to the list of eligible Environmental Modifications as noted below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental Modifications include the following type of items and/or activities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Installation of grab bars; b. Construction of access ramps, railings, <i>and banisters</i>;

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9	Comment: Please clarify that individuals living in licensed community living sites can access Environmental Modifications if needed.	Environmental Modifications are available to a person who needs them, as documented in their PCP. If the person does not own the home, the Environmental Modification must be pre-approved by the property manager or owner of the home who agrees that the person will be allowed to remain in the primary residence for at least one year.
10	Comment: Please clarify whether an individual may choose to leave a living location prior to the one year period the landlord commits to after the environmental modification.	<p>If a person is able to move, at any point, from one home to another based on their needs and their choice. Their environment, including accessibility and need for an Environmental Modification should be a factor considered as part of choosing where to live.</p> <p>A person can only have one Environmental Assessment annually, unless otherwise authorized by the DDA; and Environmental Modifications may not exceed a total of \$15,000 every three years.</p>
11	Comment: Please clarify if the use of a barrier in a vehicle that prevents an individual from interrupting the operator of the vehicle falls into Environmental Adaptation.	<p>The use of a barrier in a vehicle is not an Environmental Modification. Environmental Modifications are changes made to a participant's home.</p> <p>Any restriction that limits a person's freedom of movement, including a barrier needs to be included in a Behavior Support Plan.</p>
12	Comment: Recommend increasing the threshold for requiring an assessment to \$5,000 due to increasing costs for building supplies and equipment.	The current approved waiver requires what an Environmental Assessment is required for any modifications that cost \$2,000 and above. This recommendation can be considered for a future waiver amendment.

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13	<p>Comment: The DDA should examine barriers and delays in obtaining Environmental Modifications.</p>	<p>The DDA is dedicated to identifying and addressing barriers and delays for participants to obtain needed services. Please share information and concerns with the Regional Office.</p>
14	<p>Comment: Recommend expanding the list of qualified providers who can complete Environmental Assessments and make recommendations for Environmental Modifications, depending on the needs of the participant given the policy allows modifications to ensure safety related to behavior support needs.</p> <p>Additional recommended providers may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Licensed psychologist; b. Psychiatrist; c. Behavior Specialist; d. Physical Therapist; e. Special Educator; or f. Other trained individuals 	<p>To do an Environmental Assessment under this Waiver service, a professional must be a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Licensed Occupational Therapist by the Maryland Board of Occupational Therapy Practice; or b. Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) approved vendor <p>This policy will be updated to reflect:</p> <p><i>A provider of Environmental Assessments should work with the person's PCP team to identify other factors about the person to be taken into consideration, as well as any therapeutic needs as documented in a Behavior Support Plan, nursing assessment, Nursing Care Plan, or Physical Therapist assessment.</i></p>
15	<p>Comment: Recommend stating the list of Environmental Modifications is a sample of possible modifications and not an exhaustive list.</p>	<p>The policy notes types of modifications and is a non-exhaustive list and should be based on a participant's assessed need.</p>
16	<p>Comment: In regard to Maintenance of Environmental Modification, recommend revising the wording from, "As written in the PCP, the DDA provider must provide:" to "the provider shall facilitate:"</p>	<p>This policy will be updated to say, "As written in the PCP, the <i>provider of Environmental Modifications will facilitate:</i>"</p>

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17	Comment: In regard to documentation of service delivery, recommend revising the language, “The DDA provider providing this service...” to “The DDA provider facilitating this service...”	<p>The DDA provider, whether an Individual Provider or an OHCDF, is required to ensure documentation and records are maintained in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and guidance, and the DDA Medicaid Waiver Program application.</p> <p>This policy will be amended to clarify that, “<i>The provider of Environmental Assessments and Modifications</i> must maintain documentation and records...”</p>
18	Recommend including the installation of a kerdi drain system for the bathroom drain.	The list of Environmental Modifications in this policy is a non-exhaustive list. If a recommended modification meets the requirements of this policy, it will be considered as an Environmental Modification.
19	Recommend including vehicle modifications that are essential to the participant's health and safety during transportation from their home to community activities.	Vehicle modifications may be available to participants who have an assessed need for them under the service, “Vehicle Modifications.”
20	<p>Comment: Recommend adding language to the definition of Legally Responsible Person to be the same as is in the Waiver:</p> <p>“Legally Responsible Person” is an individual who has a legal obligation under the provisions of Maryland law to care for another individual. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A parent (either natural or adoptive) <i>of a minor</i>, legal guardian; or b. An individual otherwise legally responsible for the care of a minor (e.g., foster parent or relative appointed by court). 	The policy will be amended to include this language.